

HM402- PUBLICS IN SOUTH ASIA: CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

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Private Public space: performance, activity and connection

The term "public" means a group of people who share a common interest. It is not private but instead open to the general public. The concept of the public is also described in many sections like political science, advertising, marketing, etc. The public is one of the unintelligible terms that is not easy to understand. The public space allows individuals to share and discuss problems or ideas and affect political actions, similar to the public sphere^[3]. The word “public sphere” was invented by Jürgen Habermas, a “German Philosopher.” He defined the public sphere as “made up of private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state,” which means the place where people come together as a public and express or debate over ideas freely for the needs of the society. Habermas said in his book that the public sphere was actually established within the private sphere^[1]. The “private sphere” is complementary to the public sphere, where an individual has a certain power level.

The article “Private Publics: New Media and Performance of Pakistani Identity from Party Videos to Cable News” was written by Mobina Hashmi. She discusses the new media and the performances of the Pakistani public’s personality. The author discusses two stories from Pakistan which gained the most attention from others in early 2017. Both stories have different understandings. But the rapidly increasing growth of social media has made the domestic and

regional private life of people available to the public. This introduced the new norm that arose because it generated a recent public performance of the Pakistani identity in media with a combination of private conversations with already existing rules of general behaviors of the public^[2].

This new norm refers to private debate or discussion of the public on different media platforms. The author calls it “the private publics of the digital life in Pakistan” based on bringing out the behaviors of the public in online interaction that easily slide from politeness to hate. Many online media platforms publicize informal and intimate conversation spaces, e.g., YouTube. We get a different glimpse of a particular country or region from what we see on official channels from these spaces. Pakistan's digital cultures make global attention mainly because of “censorship.” An example is that the Pakistan government banned one film for violating the national security rules and Islamic values. This shows how someone is determined to protect their morals. Much of the debate over public/private inequality concentrates on women's travel across fluid borders affected by class, region, and religion. The author gave an example of “girls at dhabas” for that. Public behaviors frequently feature comments that highlight the complex reality of humility.

This hybrid of “public” and “private” spaces where family relations and the industrial elite negotiate how public and private businesses work together. As a result, the author claims that the state, media, and civil society procedures are better defined as accumulating the result or outcome of these relationships. Also, scholars such as Zizi Papacahrissi mention that “democratic participation needs to be civil, but need not be polite.”^[2]

The other type of space in the reading is “semi-private space,” where some males of the society discuss and debate over different public matters, e.g., “Uncle talk” in Pakistan. They follow “tehzeeb” with “takallauf” and “ikhlaaq”^[2]. Regional language-based programs or performances can easily make private places and connections with public life.

People’s opinions are not the same every time for a particular thing. Different people have different ideas or thoughts. The author discusses this matter with the example of “Sar e Aam” in detail about how some people dislike the host’s approach and, at the same time, some people like it^[2]. These different behaviors can be seen in the media public behaviors. These illustrate the different levels of thinking of people. They also reveal the various versions of the region’s private and public life. The author discussed many YouTube videos she found while working on a project^[2]. The discussion aimed to show how different people have different thoughts or opinions in the same space, which is quite similar to the commitment of Habermas to the public sphere. Some comments had positive reviews, and some words were hateful because the individual thought about violating their morals. These clashes between them can’t create the perfect nation according to Sabiha Sumar^[2].

The recent “media public” differs from the theory of Habermas about “the logical public sphere,” and it only focuses on the behaviors, feelings, morals, and attachments that occur in the digital public spaces^[2]. This media public is not much connected to other spaces, in my opinion, because you don’t need to present there physically, but you need to express your thoughts from anywhere.

- **Reference:**

1. **Habermas and the public sphere-** edited by Craig Calhoun; The MIT press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England
2. **Private Publics: New Media and Performances of Pakistani Identity from Party Videos to Cable News,** by Mobina Hashmi
3. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_space